

# OCTOBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

MCNEAL SAMS  
COLLEGE CONSULTING



## WHO WE ARE

McNeal Sams College Consulting provides expert, personalized guidance to students and families throughout the college admissions process. With decades of experience in counseling, admissions and career services, our team helps students identify best-fit schools and build strong, strategic applications.

## YOUR NEXT READ

If the college admissions process feels overwhelming, Frank Bruni's "Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be: An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania" offers a refreshing perspective. Bruni challenges the idea that only a handful of "name-brand" colleges guarantee success, showing instead how students thrive at many different schools. Through research and real-life stories, he demonstrates that opportunities, resilience and drive matter far more than prestige. We recommend this book to both parents and students as a reminder that the admissions journey is not about chasing rankings; it's about finding the right fit and building a fulfilling future.

## SEND YOUR TEST SCORES

We are in the season of testing, from PSAT to SAT to ACT. As you receive your test scores, please share them with your McNeal Sams counselor to keep your application information updated.

## IMPORTANT DATES

**Oct. 4** - SAT testing

**Oct. 18** - ACT testing

**Oct. 24** - Early registration deadline  
for SAT testing on Nov. 8

**Oct. 28** - Late registration closes for  
SAT testing on Nov. 8

# SUPPORTING YOUR STUDENT THROUGH THE COLLEGE CHOICE JOURNEY



Here you are, the parent of a high schooler who is going through the college application process. You may have done it years ago yourself, but you hear things are...well...different. The competition is exponentially greater. Everything is virtual. And it seems like the number of moving parts has exploded since your day, not to mention the marketing colleges do.

In the back of your mind you know it's just a matter of time before your children will be leaving home and doing everything for themselves. Researching colleges and completing applications offer some important practice with that. But where do you fit in the equation? How can you support your child without either taking over completely or, just as problematic, opting for benign neglect? As you ride the roller coaster of emotions, essays, and to-do lists, here are some tips that can help.

**Establish college-free zones.** Rather than letting college sneak into every conversation, choose a weekly time for it. One of our families held a "college application town hall" every Sunday for this purpose. How did it work? "It was great," the father said. "It helped us all keep the process in perspective and didn't dominate conversations during our son's last year at home."

**Normalize uncertainty.** The college application process requires waiting. *Lots* of waiting. Reassure your child that not having all the answers *immediately* is part of life, and that patience is a skill everyone has to develop.

**Coordinate logistics.** If your child is unsure which colleges need score reports sent from testing agencies, that's a perfect task for you to undertake. (For seniors and their parents, it's also on our App Tracker - do you have yours yet?) Need dates and deadlines? Provide that, especially if it leaves your child more time to write essays or finish homework (or again, if you're a senior, ask us for a customized App Tracker). Proofread the Common Application from cover to cover to look for typos, activities your child may have forgotten to include, and grammar. *Only your child* should be the one to make any changes in content.

**Model calm and confidence.** Avoid anxiety transfer: don't make the process about your own fears or pride. It's your child who is going to college, not you. Celebrate milestones along the way—you don't have to wait until acceptances arrive.

**Handle rejection like a grownup.** When rejections happen, help your child process them with perspective, not panic. Tolerating frustration and disappointment is a necessary part of building resilience. Avoid the temptation to say "I told you so"—it doesn't advance the conversation and makes it more about you than your child. And remind your child that they are the most important part of the story, not the colleges. (Want help with that? Read Frank Bruni's *Where You Go is Not Who You'll Be: An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania*.)

**Remember the big picture.** Higher education is a blessing not everyone can attain. If your child is healthy and capable enough to go to college, help make this an *enjoyable* process, not a stressfest. If you're feeling anxious, contact your McNeal Sams consultant. That's why we're here!

# OCTOBER TO-DO LISTS

## Seniors

- Send Official Test Scores: If any of your colleges require official test scores, you must send them directly from the testing agencies. This process can take 4-6 weeks, so do it now!
- Open and regularly check your applicant portals.
- Complete special program or honors college applications.
- Keep your grades up. Remember that colleges will request your first semester or first trimester report card.
- Your McNeal Sams team is here to support you each step of the way. Don't hesitate to reach out.



## Juniors

- This month, juniors will sit for the digital PSAT/NMSQT, a practice SAT and qualifying test for National Merit Scholarship Programs. Do yourself a favor, take care of yourself! The best preparation for the exam you can do at this point is to be well-rested, eat breakfast before the test, and bring water and high protein, low sugar snacks on test day.
- Believe it or not, seniors will soon be completing their application submission. That means your McNeal Sams College Consultant will soon begin to focus on you and your college search. Make sure you have shared your latest transcript and any test scores with us.
- It's time to register for your first official SAT and/or ACT.

## Sophomores

- Take practice standardized tests. No, we are not encouraging you to start your official testing or test preparation. Yes, we do want you to sit for at least one practice SAT and one practice ACT before the end of the year. Most high schools will offer you the opportunity to sit for a PSAT in October. And at many high schools, there is a practice ACT in the spring. If your school does not offer you these options, let your consultant know. We will arrange for you to take practice versions of each test.
- Begin to explore college types. By this we mean we want you to begin to explore colleges of various sizes, settings, and distances from home. Answering the big three questions this year - what size, setting and distance you want in a school - will ensure you are ready for your junior year.

## Freshmen

- Focus on your coursework and grades.
- Which clubs have you joined? Make sure you are involved with at least two clubs this school year.